

probable new route on its southwest buttress that we dubbed *Duraznos para Don Quijote* (IV 5.10+ C1). The ten-pitch route was established in one day with no fixed rope or bolts and only three points of clean aid. After another week of the most hideous weather I've ever witnessed, the barometer began to rise, so we escaped our fetid tent and climbed the *Monzino* route (IV 5.10) on the North Tower of Paine for the first Canadian ascent of the mountain.

Another three weeks passed with no climbing at all. Guy, deciding that he'd rather check out the beaches of Chile and their abundant wildlife than spend quality time with me at base camp, left all his gear to Steve Normandin, a friend from Canmore who was trekking. Steve and I immediately took advantage of some mediocre weather and began fixing on a new line we scoped out on the west face of the north summit of the North Tower. With five pitches fixed and only about four remaining to the summit, we received a perfect day after a week of gnarly storms only to find most of our rope shredded by the wind. With no gear or time remaining, we called it quits and descended to town for a long-awaited fiesta.

SEAN ISAAC, *unaffiliated*

\*The climbers were recipients of the John Lauchlan Award

*Patagonia, Traverse.* Carsten Birckhahn (Germany) and partners made a traverse from the Pacific to the Atlantic oceans across Patagonia in the spring of 1998. They started at the Pacific Ocean in Fiordo Calvo, then crossed the Hielo Continental Patagonico carrying their kayaks. They then traveled over the Perito Moreno Glacier, then crossed Lago Argentino in their kayaks. In April, they finished the traverse on the Argentine side in the Atlantic Ocean via the Santa Cruz River, having crossed all of Patagonia from west to east.

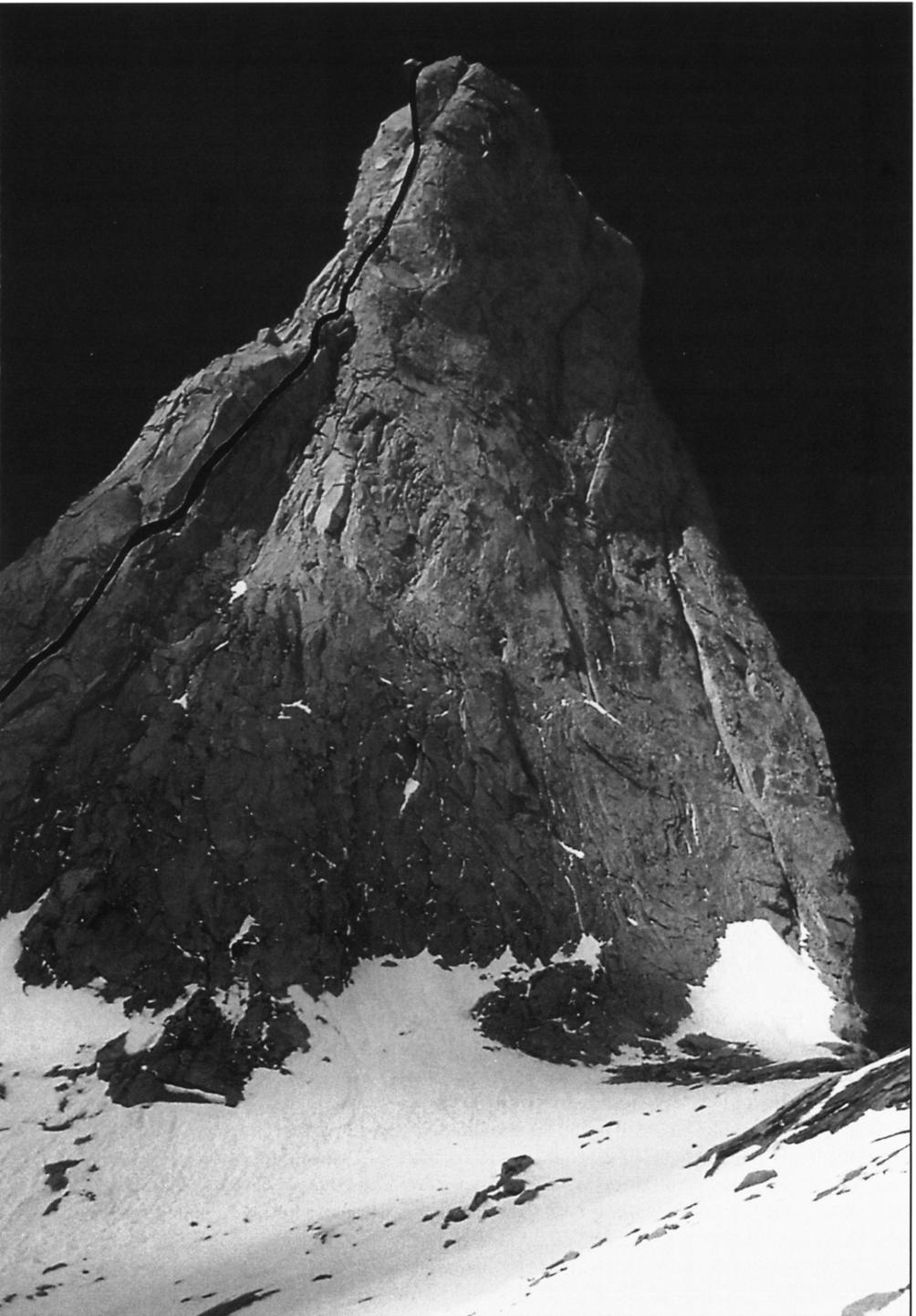
FACUNDO JOSE, *Club Andino Bariloche*

*North Tower, Spirito Libero.* On February 2, 1998, the team of Fabio Leoni and Elio Orlandi from Trento, Italy, put up a new route on the north spur of the North Tower of Paine. The route, *Spirito Libero* (V 5.11a, 500m), was put up in alpine style. They climbed the 12-pitch route in 18 hours, leaving their bivouac at 7 a.m., summiting at 8 p.m. and returning to their bivouac at 1 a.m. Fabio and Elio took advantage of the only day of good weather in one month at base camp. El Niño conditioned the expedition of the two Trento climbers as it did the majority of the teams in the Towers of Paine National Park. The wave of bad weather, with torrential rain, was particularly bad in the middle of February.

MARIO MAICA, *Italy*

*Torres del Diablo and The Bader Valley, Various Ascents.* On January 18, John Merriam, Dylan Taylor, Darrel Gschwendtner and I teamed up with Mark Slovak and Robert Bodrogi to visit the Torres del Diablo (a.k.a. Grupo La Paz). Five hours south of Puerto Natales by fishing boat, steep metamorphosed towers rise from glaciated terrain. Amazing couloirs separate one tower from another. Donini and Chouinard climbed one of the three in the late '80s via a north face route. Our attention was drawn by the soaring south faces. Unfortunately the weather and wind battered us for 13 days, at which point we had run out of food, sustained broken tent poles, ripped flies, and had headed down to the shore line with hopes for a boat. Mussels and seaweed nourished us for a few days until a friend arrived, late, with a fisherman, a boat, and, most importantly, bread, coffee and sugar.

In early February, after refueling in Puerto Natales, Dylan, Darrel, John and I hauled



*Peinata, showing Duranzos para Don Quixote. SEAN ISAAC*

climbing gear and 20 days' worth of food into the Bader Valley of the Torres del Paine. On February 9, John and I completed the second ascent of *Vuelo Del Condor* on Cuerno Este, finding perfect golden granite. The good weather had begun, and the Bader's east faces are sheltered from the furious westerly winds. On the eleventh day we ascended a golden pillar on Cuerno Norte, lying about 1,000 feet to the north of *Fist Full of Dollars*. We call it *Little Debbie's Golden Pillar* (IV 5.11 A1). The route involves some steep, loose, wet rock as well as immaculate golden splitters. We topped out on the pillar in early evening. To climb to the shale from there would have meant a few rotten vertical and overhanging pitches—not impossible, but the wind was ripping above us at nearly 100 mph, knocking rocks off the summit that soared past both us and the sheltered face. The rain that had been pestering us all day had returned and the glacier below was creaking and groaning. The land, amazingly alive, overloaded the senses.

Looking to the north as we began the 1,700-foot descent, a perfect line up Cerro Mascara (a.k.a. the Mummer) showed itself. It topped out with what appeared to be a 600 to 800-foot golden dihedral. Three days later we were there.

On February 19, with no fixed lines or use of a hammer, John and I made the first one-day ascent of Cerro Mascara. Beginning in the Bader Valley, five pitches with much simulclimbing brought us to the notch between Cuerno Norte and Mascara. From there the cold south face lent us passage, flawless hand and finger cracks and a soaring corner system. *Duncan's Dihedral* (a fantastic IV 5.11 A1), as we later named it, engendered the beauty of the surrounding land. The 2,300-foot descent was the most fearsome part.

After refueling once more in Puerto Natales and stopping by Amerindia, a great local bar and café, John and I headed up to Japanese camp for an attempt at one of the Torres. El Niño returned with heavy rain and snow. The 100-year flood soon followed. At 2:30 a.m. on February 28, Steve Schneider, John Merriam and I woke in waterbeds. The Rio Paine had broken its banks and forced our camp under a foot and a half of rushing muddy water. Some food and gear was lost, along with optimism for another climb. The next few days were spent in a plastic shack that a few Spanish climbers had built. The three of us played chess and harmonicas and reminisced about the glorious sun. Little did we know the park had been evacuated by helicopter and boat. Bridges had been destroyed and trails were under water. We were alone. Patagonia had expressed its wild character; El Niño accentuated it. We left with love, in awe, in a boat.

JONATHON COPP

*La Mascara, Cuerno Principal, Cuerno Este, and Cuerno Norte, Various Activity.* In mid-January, 1998, Darrell Gschwendtner, John Merriam, Jonathan Copp, and I traveled to Chilean Patagonia with hopes of climbing new routes. Following an aborted attempt (*see above*) at climbing some remote metamorphic towers, we focused our attention on route possibilities in the Bader Valley of Torres Del Paine National Park. The Bader Valley is virtually untouched, and only a few routes exist on the wind-sheltered east-facing walls. In early February, we were blessed with a rare spell of sunny weather lasting for almost three weeks.

Darrell and I spent some time scanning the east face of La Mascara (a.k.a. the Mummer), finding several route possibilities. We chose a wandering line that ran directly up the east buttress. It required awkward nailing on expanding flakes (A2+?) with only a small amount of free climbing (up to 5.10). Disappointed that our line was so time-consuming and lacking in the free climbing that we hoped to find, we abandoned our efforts after only a few pitches. Simultaneously, on the other side of the valley, our friend Fletcher Yaw, fresh off of

*La Mascara, a.k.a. The Mummer, from the Pingos Valley. Duncan's Dihedral takes the shining arête.*

JONATHON COPP